1: Whiting E-5 (1936-1937) 1941
OJ13 Kwoma OJ13

relatives to help. All the members of the hamlet who do not have pressing work of their own are expected to answer this call and appear the next morning at the place where the work is to be done. The *brothers* of the married women of the households who are giving the bee are also expected to help if they can. While the men work, the women prepare the feast. Then, early in the afternoon, after a long morning's work, the men stop and go to the house of one of the boss gardeners where the feast is to be given. The men form a separate group from the women, eat in a leisurely manner, smoke, chew betel, and indulge in horseplay between courses. After the meal the older men either gossip or nap while the boys tease one another and play. The work is over for the day. The Kwoma are perfectly familiar with the patterned behavior of these work parties, since they have participated in them frequently during childhood and adolescence. When they become adult they have to plan the work bees, direct the gathering of food, and announce the day.

The first task in gardening is to choose a site, a decision which rests with the boss gardeners. They must balance the advantages and disadvantages of cultivating a plot in the hamlet or in an outlying district.[1] If the garden is planted near the dwelling, it has to be enclosed by a fence to prevent domestic pigs from rooting up the crop, but it is near at hand. If a site is cleared in an outlying district, it may take several hours to walk there, but it need not be fenced.

The garden site is usually cleared by means of a number of work bees. Since it takes considerable time and effort to provide food for the feast, the task of clearing a site is normally spread over several weeks, and sometimes months. The first task, which is performed by adolescent boys and men, is to climb the trees and lop off the branches in order to let sun down to the earth below. The old men and children clear the brush and stack it and the cut branches into piles for burning.

After the site has been cleared and the rubbish burned,

[1] Property rights, also, determine the choice. The division and ownership of land will be discussed below.

beliefs about blood appear again to determine a facet of the yam-planting complex. It is believed that in the process of planting yams a man's blood becomes associated with the seed, and hence contaminates the produce. Thus, if a man should eat his own harvest, it would be equivalent to eating his own blood, and he would sicken and die. If he heeds the warning implied in this belief, he must have yams that are planted by someone else or go without them. Kwoma culture resolves the dilemma as follows: at the time of planting, a section of the garden large enough to produce sufficient yams for the planter's personal needs is set aside. He does not plant this section, but calls on a *brother* to do it for him. This provides a section whose produce will not be contaminated by his blood and which he may therefore eat with impunity. In return he plants a similar section in his *brother's* garden.

After the yams are put in the ground, nothing but weeding need be done until the sprouts appear. The women of the gardening group do this, bending from the waist rather than kneeling, and pulling the weeds with thumb and fingers. They keep the ground clear until the plants have a good start and then allow the weeds to spring up unheeded.

Soon after the yam sprouts have broken the ground, stringers must be provided to support the climbing vines. In preparation for this, men and boys cut lianas from the forest and split them into sections about the diameter of the little finger and about thirty feet long. They tie a loop formed by a half knot on the standing part on one end of each of these ropes and coil them into bundles. The women carry these bundles in their net bags to the garden, where the men hang the lianas by the loops from the branches of the denuded trees. To do this they use a long bamboo pole with a cross stick, lashed a few inches from the top to prevent the loop from sliding down the pole. The free ends of the lianas are pegged to the ground a few inches from each yam hill. Each hill is thus provided with a stringer, one end of which is attached to a branch and the other to a peg in the ground. Once every few days thereafter the men go over the garden and train the yam tendrils on the stringer. The gar-

349 coconut fronds, standing up. They claimed that this was an innovation
[179] brought in by the "finish timers"; perhaps it has replaced some other element in their culture. It is interesting to note that Bateson took a picture, printed in Oceania, which is very reminiscent of this.

123 We first were given a coconut, the milk of which we drank. The
262 natives were eating sago, pig, and roast sago grubs. After a while it was suggested that if we wanted to eat "food belong kanaka" we could. They did it in a way so that we could have refused had we wished, but seemed as though they would be flattered if we accepted. I remember reading several accounts of similar situations described by ethnographers and travellers where they had eaten some outlandish food, as they said, to avoid insulting the natives. I feel that if we had refused, they might have been mildly hurt, but not insulted. The sago was handed to us wrapped in a leaf--a gelatinous globule. It was absolutely tasteless, and I did not find it very pleasant. I don't think Tip did either. Neither of us finished our helping, but gave them to some of the natives who were glad to finish them for us. The roast grubs were really quite good, but despite myself, I was a bit disgusted--not so much, however, that I didn't get down a goodly number of them.

796 After dinner the dancing recommenced as before, and shortly thereafter we
123 were told to leave. We were each given a coconut and a yam as a parting gift, told that the singsing would continue all night, but that it was taboo to us.
[417] The next day someone was going to build a screen across the front of the
[346] house tamberan so that the women, and uninitiated children who would come into the
[198] front court could not see the sacred altar.

796 around a framework. At the front and back ends, tilting toward the center,
346 were two huge masks, about four feet long and a foot wide. They were
778 beautifully carved and painted in black, white , red, and green. At the
[532] top of each mask was fastened what looked like feather work, a semblance of
[237] hair. Capping this were plumes similar to those worn by the dancers themselves.
The mask near the front was called asambwaŋ, and belonged to Waskuk (an old man of Waskuk actually owned it); the one at the rear was called abʔmakus and belonged to Bangus (actually to the cicatrizer). The space between the masks on the top of the altar was covered with shell ornaments. A pumpkin seed shaped ornament of small cowrie shells fastened in rows on a woven or closely netted fabric was called sawʔmaŋ. Another was similarly constructed, but shaped as a crocodile, with two larger shells for eyes, and called no maski (no means crocodile). Plumes, cockatoo, pigeon, etc, were set in various
[535] places in addition to bit of yellow grass hung in bunches. Some of the dancers also wore this same yellow grass stuck into their arm and leg bands.

796 The front of the house tamberan had been hidden from view by a 6½' screen.
346 While it prevented the women and children from seeing the sacred precincts,
417 the men could and did stand up on the framework of the screen to look out onto the other side. The women and children were not to come until the next day, but some of the men, at least one anyway, were on the women's side. We did not dare look over the screen for fear of breaking some taboo.

796 After a few minutes, we were escorted to some seats (planks that had been
533 hewn from 2' x 6' x 8" logs, and roughly carved), and told that the singsing
[123] would begin soon. Some of the natives began to walk slowly and silently around
[352] the altar while the "lulual" of Bangus, (one of the Kwoma hamlets) Sowinambi, began a verse in a high voice which ended in a prolonged o on the same note and fell off to a wi with shorter duration, on a lower note. This verse was answered from the other side of the screen in exactly the same manner, but with different words to the verse.

764 came soon after we arrived and sat down. Then about six young men, mostly "savvy talks" came into the clearing carrying a large wooden shield carved on its [754] face. They came up, greeted me, and at once began talking in much the same vein as Sof had the night before about the evils of black magic. Kwonayi came up, [123] shook my hand and took the lead during all of this conversation, keeping ahold of my hand the whole time. They excitedly talked about getting my cooperation in punishing the culprit when he was found. They planned to take him to the [754] "kiop" and have him put in the calabouse. They said the dead man had been poisoned by somebody getting some of his food and burning it. They warned me not to throw any of my food near the road where the natives could get at it.

When they had talked themselves out, they carried the shield over and lifted the dead man onto it. Two women came and each broke a lime gourd on the shield, and poured the lime out. Two of the young men then lifted the shield onto their shoulders and started down the hill. I asked Kwonayi if I could follow, and he assured me there was nothing to be afraid of.

The procession very shortly reached a small clearing where there was a house. On either side of the structure has been built a tall rectangular form, one the burial platform of the man who had died a few weeks ago and the other ready to receive the present remains. There was a faint smell of decaying [417] flesh coming from the older platform. The other one had a ladder leading up to the small cubicle which was formed by a platform and flat roof. The body was carried up the ladder feet first and the shield was removed. Then the women, who had resumed their wailing when the man had been put on the shield, entered the enclosure and sat down in front of the house. When I had first arrived only one of them had any special mark of mourning--her face had been smeared with clay. Now most of them had a band of lime on their foreheads-- presumably [602] from the broken lime gourds. (Later I found out that the classificatory sisters of the deceased wore this badge; relatives by marriage did not.)

126 and the men are averse to having pictures taken of their more esoteric ceremonies. Some of the women had a "cross" on with me a while ago for taking a lot of photos of their trading with Yambon. They seem to have a sense of shame at their nakedness.

Developing our negatives is a risky business. By rising before six we can usually get our solutions to 70°F. But once we start to develop, we are at the mercy of the weather. If a mist sets in, it is likely to last all morning so that is takes an entire day for the negatives to dry as they should.

(Again Tip).

796 December 17th, 1936./ The nokwi sugwi which we attended a week ago today was a banner occasion. We had heard it called, in pidgin, "singsing bilong mari", so we were ready for anything up to ceremonial rape. The morning was cold and rainy and only a few men were at the house tamberan beating the huge gong. We had arranged to go down to Abagalis with War, but we had [302] to wait about half an hour while he 'dressed'. This consisted of smearing [301] his body with a sticky oil, drawing a black band with charcoal around the hair line of his face, carefully painting his face with ochre powder, putting on broad shell-washer arm bands and a tiny rope of shells across the forehead, and finally sticking a bird of paradise 'duster' in his hair.

During this process we talked with War's brothers who are "finish-timers" of our age. These lads are still too young to go to this ceremony. What the qualifications are we do not know, but have an idea that the members [417] fulfill the homicide qualification. When we arrived at Abagalis we found that a high fence of sago fronds had been erected around the clearing at the north end of the house tamberan. Near the center was a 10' x 3' pit [534] dug in the ground and half filled with water. In the water suspended by both ends was what we will call a water gong. It is made of the good

252 of the distance from the strainer to keep the new unprecipitated liquid from running over and to prevent the bottom part from being stirred up. The sago has precipitated, excess water that has not yet gone through the strainer might be scooped from the top leaving the mass of sago slightly drier. The mass of sago is wrapped in leaves and carried home.

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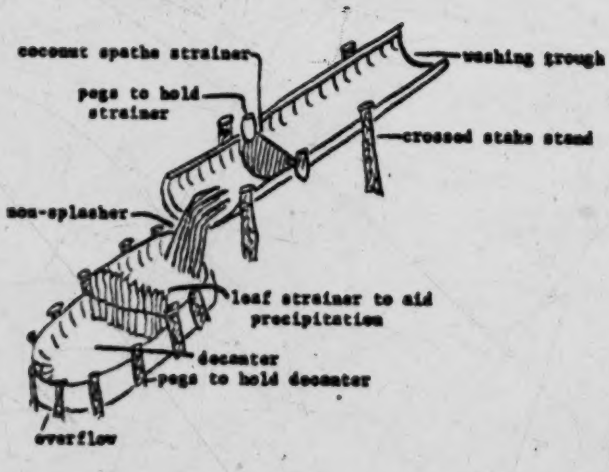
Sago Washing Trough



coconut shell dipper